

TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT

ISSUE: Mobility Options

Comments from Planning Team at 9/22/03 Meeting

Accommodating a Wide Variety of Needs

- Transit drivers have new challenges. Buses now have bikes on the front and wheel chairs inside to accommodate.
- We need to make sure we talk about intermodal access, namely bicycle racks on front of buses and roll-on access on trains, as in other parts of the country.
- Today there are complex trip chains and travel patterns that transit needs to accommodate, not just home-to-work.

Congestion

- Transit must have some advantage to bypass congestion to be truly effective, e.g. HOV Lanes, etc.
- Current transit ridership can accommodate only about 10% of the employment trips. Varies from area to area.

Funding

- No matter what the form of public transportation, they are all under-funded and need additional sources of funding.
- Learned that as regional transportation systems grow across the state, this places an enormous stress on CTF and current funding is not going to meet the demands of expenses.
- How much money can we spend in regards to the % of the population that can be served? We need to balance that ratio.
- Taxation is Not an Option. We are hindered by the state constitution that prohibits local sales taxes for transit in general.
- Make sure non motorized transportation is integrated in and appropriately funded.
- Losing over half of transit taxes; need to bring more transit \$ back into the state.
- We need to find some source of funding that is free of transportation funding restrictions is not a sales tax and is not a mileage issue.

Loss of Airports

- Loss of general aviation airports, about 1 per year. Need to examine why that is happening and come up with solutions.
- Need to include airports in the definition of intermodalism.

Time is a Major Factor

- Importance of keeping 'on schedule,' is critical for the success of mass transit options; i.e., on-time departures/arrivals.
- Issue of customers' expectations for timeliness of travel departures and arrivals affects rail and air. But there seems to be a higher level of tolerance for intercity buses, in regards to anticipated time of arrival and departures.

Customer Demand

- Need to improve the mobility in urban areas.
- Access to education and job opportunities are forcing transportation issues.
- There is an opportunity for public transit to broaden their scope in services related to schools, businesses, auto parts industry, etc.
- Overdependence on motorized transportation is to the point that other modes take serious reductions or will be in jeopardy.
- Need policy in dealing with chartered schools; we haven't fully addressed their impact on public transportation. Need some way to support the transportation infrastructure knowing that chartered schools don't have the transportation systems that traditional public school systems have.
- In some cases, demand impacts the level of service, specifically Greyhound and intercity services.
- A lot of images around congestion. The image is the public transportation is a way to reduce congestion but there is no coherent way to do that.

Coordinated Efforts

- These are regional issues that need to be resolved at a regional level. The further away you get from the problem, the more difficult it is to resolve.
- A very fragmented organization for public transportation.
- There is a need for a plan, to take directly to the voters and get an agreement on that plan to implement.

New Technologies

- Increased use of technology can help us manage our mobility options.
- Should expand research into new technology, for example Curitiba rubber rail.

Evaluating Current Options

- Evaluation is needed on a variety of different types of transit options.
- Two issues that are important: use performance factors to evaluate our systems and all actively participate in intermodal activities. They are like mobility managers with performance measures.
- Needs to be a fairly comprehensive look at freight and passenger transportation. Not just trains, but all modes of transportation.

Public Education and Marketing

- Some talk about a misperception on part of public and government that public transit and rail are inefficient or wasteful. There needs to be more public education. And they are really under-funded.
- We have generations that have not grown up with public transit nor have used it. Need public education on using public transit as an option.
- Different types of transportation would be more appealing to public if it was packaged; for example to include transportation connections, lodging, and entertainment.
- Effective marketing is a big suggestion. Most people aren't aware of the services and therefore don't use them. Make people aware of the advantages of using public transit; i.e., safety, convenience, and cost.
- The public needs to be educated on the use of public transportation. How to use it.
- There is a need for a traveler information system so people are aware of mobility options.

Coordination

- Stressed the importance of coordinating the different modes of transportation.
- Role of the private sector in providing transportation services integrated and coordinated with the public sector; i.e. limousine, intercity buses, taxis.
- Need to look at connection between economic development and public transportation.
- For regional authorities to work, we need a good plan to reference when dealing with local politics.
- Across the state, the regional dynamic is of the utmost important. Not just a SE issue. Because of changing society/economy we have to provide these transportation needs.
- Don't lose concept that public transit isn't the only solution to improve our mobility; there are many solutions and all need to work together.
- Importance of coordination of different transportation at different levels. Funded at different levels and needs to be coordinated.
- Heard today that the traditional urban transit operators are being heavily stretched. Need more coordination.
- Think more regionally.

Alternatives and Solutions:

- Need for seamless interconnectivity and convenience to riders.
- There is no silver bullet to the issue of mobility. Need to avail ourselves to all opportunities that are out there. To improve the mobility in urban area.
- Population is changing demographics. Not being able to use an automobile means looking for alternate solutions.

- Partnerships in the Upper Peninsula were formed very strategically to carry out a mission and that can be used as a template of how SMART and DDOT might do the same.
- Need to look at pilot projects like diamond lanes, light rail, high impact corridors, etc. for connectivity to employment centers and housing.
- Need to have more research on what options people would use if they were equally convenient and accessible. Would they be willing to change their behavior if transit was “better” than it is?
- Not discussed was a voucher system as an alternative way. It would be like a check book that a consumer can use.
- Take a look at how private sector subsidizes its employees’ travel and makes sure it is equitable across all modes. If giving them free parking for their car, should look at giving them passes.
- There is a need for seamless connectivity amongst the modes.

Further Considerations

- Look at effect of post “911” life in public transit. It is a significant issue along the bridges.
- There are specific issues that freight railroads are concerned with when freight and passengers are mixed: capacity, liability, safety, and cost to the railroad.
- One thing not discussed today but that we need to discuss is transit oriented development.
- Some reform in non emergency Medicare and Medicaid transportation funding.
- Didn’t hear much about energy effects of transit.
- No connection with air quality and mobility options. The new air ozone standards coming into effect and will affect all of this.
- More appropriate to call this “mass transit;” which then includes public and private.
- Dependence of transit on the existence and maintenance of non motorized system.
- Make sure non motorized transportation is integrated in and appropriately funded.